

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USNATO 6645

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NATO, PFOR, CH, UR

SUBJECT: SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS

1. HERewith TEXT OF DRAFT ASSESSMENT OF SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS (ISD 98) PREPARED BY NATO/IS ON THE BASIS OF RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS SUBMITTED BY SEVERAL DELEGATIONS. THIS DRAFT WILL BE DISCUSSED AT POLADS ON DECEMBER 3. ACTION REQUESTED: TIMELY COMMENTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT.

2. BEGIN TEXT:

SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS HAVE DEVELOPED INTERESTING AND POSSIBLY IMPORTANT NUANCES IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS. AT THIS STAGE IT WOULD BE UNWISE TO JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS AND WE CAUTION AGAINST SOME OF THE MORE SPECTACULAR CONCLUSIONS BEING DRAWN BY CERTAIN WESTERN COMMENTATORS.

I. SINO-SOVIET SIGNALS

1. IN A SPEECH AT FRUNZE ON 2ND NOVEMBER KOSYGIN TOOK
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ADVANTAGE OF HIS NEARNESS TO THE CHINESE FRONTIER TO MAKE A NUMBER OF REMARKS ON RELATIONS WITH THE PRC. HE STATED THAT THE USSR WAS DOING EVERYTHING IN ITS POWER TO MAKE THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF ITS BORDER WITH CHINA A BOUNDARY OF PEACE, GOOD NEIGHBOURLY

CO-OPERATION AND FRIENDSHIP. THE SOVIET DESIRE FOR NORMAL RELATIONS WITH CHINA WAS A PERMANENT POSITION THAT WAS NOT DEPENDENT ON TEMPORARY FACTORS. IF NORMALIZATION HAD NOT BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR THE ENTIRE RESPONSIBILITY RESTED WITH PEKING WHICH, IN ITS HATRED FOR THE USSR, HAD LINED UP WITH THE MOST REACTIONARY FORCES AND SOUGHT EVERYWHERE TO DAMAGE THE CAUSE OF PEACE AND SOCIALISM. KOSYGIN NEVERTHELESS EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT IN FUTURE THIS SITUATION WOULD CHANGE; BECAUSE OF THE WILL OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE, THE PRC WOULD ADVANCE IN A UNITED FRONT WITH THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES ON THE ROAD TO PEACE AND SOCIALISM.

THIS WAS FOLLOWED UP BY COMMENTS ON CHINA BY GROMYKO IN HIS 6TH NOVEMBER REPORT TO THE CPSU. HE BEGAN WITH A PASSAGE ACCUSING CHINA OF UNITING WITH IMPERIALIST REACTION TO OBSTRUCT THE DEVELOPMENT OF PEACEFUL INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION. WHILE THE USSR WOULD CONTINUE TO REPULSE THESE EFFORTS, HE DECLARED, IT WOULD GO ON STRIVING FOR NORMAL RELATIONS AND, INDEED, WOULD DO ALL IN ITS POWER TO ACHIEVE FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE PRC. THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR STALKED OSTENTATIOUSLY FROM HALL AS SOON AS GROMYKO BEGAN HIS REMARKS ON CHINA.

BOTH KOSYGIN AND GROMYKO DREW ATTENTION TO THE SOVIET PROPOSAL FOR AN ASIAN SECURITY SYSTEM.

2. ON 7TH NOVEMBER, IN A MESSAGE TO THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT MARKING THE 57TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION, THE CHINESE HAVE MADE A NEW MOVE IN THE SINO-SOVIET BORDER DISPUTE: THEY VOICED WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT LONG-STANDING SOVIET PROPOSALS FOR NON-AGGRESSION AND NON-USE OF FORCE AGREEMENTS. THEY ALSO STATED THAT THIS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A DISENGAGEMENT OF TROOPS FROM DISPUTED AREAS, THE PREVENTION OF ARMED CONFLICT AND THE MAINTENANCE OF THE STATUS QUO ON THE BORDER (WHICH SEEMS TO INCLUDE THE PRESERVATION OF TIME HONOURED RIGHTS AND CUSTOMS, SUCH AS THE USE OF NAVIGATION CHANNEL ON EITHER SIDE OF THE BOUNDARY AND THE RIGHT OF THE LOCAL POPULATION TO CROSS EASILY).

SINCE JUNE 1970, BREZHNEV HAS BEEN PROPOSING A NON-CONFIDENTIAL

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AGGRESSION PACT. THE KREMLIN PRESENTED DRAFTS IN JANUARY 1971 AND JUNE 1973. EVEN EARLIER, ON 11TH SEPTEMBER, 1969, KOSYGIN MET CHOU-EN-LAI AT PEKING AIRPORT AND MADE SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR CONSILIATING THEIR DISPUTES. BUT THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE IN THE SOVIET AND CHINESE POSITIONS IS THAT THE USSR HAS ALWAYS REFUSED TO LINK SUCH A PACT WITH A WITHDRAWAL OF ARMED FORCES FROM DISPUTED AREAS.

3. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THEREFORE THAT GROMYKO SHOULD HAVE BACKED AWAY FROM KOSYGIN'S EMPHASIS ON A BORDER OF PEACE AND INSTEAD HAVE LAID INCREASED WEIGHT ON THE NEED FOR THE CHINESE TO STOP CONSORTING WITH THE IMPERIALISTS. THE IMPRESSION OF DEFENSIVENESS LEFT BY GROMYKO'S REMARKS IS STRENGTHENED BY THE

TREATMENT GIVEN IN THE SOVIET NEWSPAPERS TO THE CHINESE MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATIONS ON THE SOVIET NATIONAL DAY. ALL THAT WAS PUBLISHED WAS A PARAPHRASE OF THE TEXT WHICH REPLACED THE SPECIFIC CHINESE PROPOSALS WITH A SENTENCE STATING THE MESSAGE HAD SET OUT THE KNOWN POSITION OF THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT ON THE QUESTION OF SOVIET-CHINESE RELATIONS. IT ALSO DROPPED THE WORD "GREAT" IN REFERENCE TO THE "GREAT SOVIET PEOPLE".

THE USSR HAS NOW CLEARLY REPLIED TO THE CHINESE. IN A SPEECH IN ASHKABAD ON 18TH NOVEMBER, POLITBURO MEMBER KIRILENKO, WITHOUT REFERRING TO THE CHINESE MESSAGE DIRECTLY, MADE IT CLEAR THAT THERE WAS NO SHIFT IN THE SOVIET POSITION. HE DID SO IN TERMS THAT WERE PARALLEL TO, BUT SOMEWHAT HARDER, THAN THOSE USED BY GROMYKO ON 6TH NOVEMBER AND NOTICEABLY HARsher THAN THOSE OF KOSYGIN ON 2ND NOVEMBER.

KIRILENKO DECLARED IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT THE LEADERS OF THE PRC NOT INFREQUENTLY WERE FOUND IN THE RANKS OF THE OPPONENTS OF DETENTE, ANTI-SOVIETS OF VARIOUS STRIPES AND ENEMIES OF SOCIALIST CO-OPERATION. THE SOVIET POSITION ON RELATIONS WITH THE PRC AND THE PRESENT POLICY OF HER LEADERS WAS WELL KNOWN; IT HAD BEEN SET OUT ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS BY PARTY AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS. IN ESSENCE IT WAS A DECISIVE AND PRINCIPLED REBUFF OF ANTI-SOVIET SLANDER AND HOSTILE INTRIGUES DIRECTED AGAINST THE CPSU AND THE USSR, AS WELL AS ITS FRIENDS AND ALLIES; THIS POSITION EXPRESSED AS WELL A CONSTANT WILLINGNESS FOR BUSINESSLIKE NEGOTIATIONS AND A GENUINE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS ON A PRINCIPLED BASIS. THE SOVIET POSITION WAS FOUNDED ON THE DECISION OF 24TH PARTY CONGRESS AND REMAINED UNCHANGED.
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II. INTERPRETING THESE SINO-SOVIET SIGNALS

4. IT SEEMS THAT GROMYKO'S REMARKS ON CHINA ON 6TH NOVEMBER CONSTITUTED THE INITIAL SOVIET RESPONSE TO THE CHINESE STATEMENT. THE SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTRY RECEIVED THE PRC CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE INCORPORATING THE CHINESE STATEMENT ONLY TEN HOURS BEFORE GROMYKO SPOKE. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THIS ORDINARILY WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH TIME, HOWEVER, TO OBTAIN POLITBURO APPROVAL FOR ANY CHANGE IN A TEXT ON A SUBJECT AS SENSITIVE AS CHINA; NEVERTHELESS, IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT GROMYKO'S REMARKS SHOULD DIFFER FROM THOSE OF KOSYGIN AND BE PARALLEL TO THOSE OF KIRILENKO. IF GROMYKO'S SPEECH WAS CHANGED AT SUCH SHORT NOTICE TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE CHINESE MESSAGE IT WOULD BE AN INDICATION OF THE IMPORTANCE THAT THE RUSSIANS ATTRIBUTED TO THE CHINESE STATEMENT.

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ACTION EUR-12

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5. ACCORDING TO THE PRC EMBASSY IN MOSCOW, THE CHINESE HAD DECIDED TO MAKE USE OF THE CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE TO REASSERT THEIR POSITIN ON SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS, WHICH HAD BEEN STATED SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE, NOTABLY IN CHOUS SPEECH AT THE 10TH PARTY CONGRESS, AND TO MAKE PUBLIC FOR THE FIRST TIME THE FACT THAT IN THEIR VIEW THIS POSITION CORRESPONDED TO THE UNDERSTANDING REACHED BETWEEN KOSYGIN AND CHOU-EN-LAI IN SEPTEMBER 1969, BECAUSE THE RUSSIANS HAD FOR YEARS BEEN PUTTING FORWARD PARTS OF THE UNDERSTANDING THEY FAVOURED AS A SOVIET PROPOSAL AND USING IT TO PROPAGANDA ADVANTAGE. THE PARTICULAR INCIDENT THAT PRECIPITATED THE CHINESE DECISION WAS THE INCLUSION IN THE SOVIET CONGRAULATORY MESSAGE FOR THE CHINESE NATIONAL DAY ON 1ST OCTOBER OF A PROPOSAL FOR THE CONCLUSION OF NON-AGGRESSION AND NON-USE OF FORCE TREATIES. THE CINESE MAINTAIN THAT THE PLEDGES OF NON-AGRESSION AND RENUNCIATION OF FORCE WERE TO FORM PART OF THE PACKAGE TO BE NEGOTIATED UNDER THE 1969 UNDERSTANDING. THE WORDING AND STYLE OF THE CHINESE CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE MIRROR THOSE OF THE SOVIET MESSAGE. ALTHOUGH THE PRC EMBASSY HAS NOT SAID SO, IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THE CHINESE WERE INFLUENCED IN THEIR DECISION TO MAKE THE 1969 UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC BY THE RESUMPTION AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER OF THE SOVIET CONFIDENTIAL

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CAMPAIGN FOR AN ASIAN SECURITY SYSTEM WHICH SEEMS INTENDED AMONG OTHER THINGS TO UNDERCUT THE 1969 AGREEMENT TO NEGOTIATE BOUNDARY QUESTIONS.

6. THE CHINESE OBJECTIVE IN SENDING THIS APPARENTLY CONCILIATORY MESSAGE IS PROBABLY TO GAIN THE UPPER HAND IN THE PROPAGANDA BATTLE OF APPEARING REASONABLE. THEY HAVE BEEN AT PAINS TO DRAW THE ATTENTION OF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS IN PEKING AND MOSCOW TO THEIR MESSAGE. THE CHINESE PROBABLY WISH TO IMPROVE THEIR IMAGE PRIOR TO THE PROPOSED MEETING OF EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES IN 1975 AND FORESTALL ATTEMPTS BY THE RUSSIANS, IN THAT AND OTHER CONTEXTS, TO LABEL THEM AS "INTRANSIGENT".

THEY MAY ALSO WISH TO PLACE ON RECORD AN APPARENTLY REASONABLE POSITION IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE SOVIET-UNITED STATES SUMMIT MEETING AT VLADIVOSTOK. FURTHERMORE, THE CHINESE MIGHT HAVE COME TO REALIZE THAT THEIR EFFORTS TO GAIN INFLUENCE IN THE THIRD WORLD BY TRYING TO EXCLUDE THE USSR WERE NOT SUCCEEDING THROUGH THE TACTIC OF CONSTANTLY ATTACKING THE USSR. THEREFORE THERE MIGHT BE A CHINESE DECISION TO ADOPT A LESS INTRANSIGENT ATTITUDE TO THE USSR. HOWEVER, THEIR ANTI-SOVIET AIMS REMAINED THE SAME.

HOW MUCH IMPORTANCE TO ATTACH TO THESE DEVELOPMENTS DEPENDS ON:

- SOME INDICATION THAT THE PRC INTEND THEIR MESSAGE AS MORE THAN A TACTICAL MOVE, AND IN THIS CONNECTION THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW FOREIGN MINISTER MAY BE OF SIGNIFICANCE; AND
- THE SOVIET RESPONSE TO THE CHINESE MESSAGE.

THE SOVIET POSITION ALWAYS HAS BEEN THAT THEY WISH FOR A NORMALIZATION OF INTER-GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND THEY WOULD PROBABLY WELCOME A PLAYING DOWN OF THE DISPUTE ON THIS LEVEL. NO DOUBT THEY HAVE NOT TOO MANY HOPES THAT A RECOMMENCEMENT OF SERIOUS TALKS ON BORDER QUESTIONS WILL LEAD TO ANY MARKED IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE PRC BUT IT MIGHT AT LEAST LEAD TO A DECREASE IN THE VIOLENCE OF POLEMICS.

ON THE OTHER HAND, IT HAS BEEN EVIDENT FOR MANY WEEKS THAT TENSION BETWEEN THE TWO GREAT NEIGHBOURS HAS SUBSIDED AND THE CHINESE HAVE STARTED PROCLAIMING THEY NO LONGER FEAR A RUSSIAN CONFIDENTIAL

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MILITARY INVASION. THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER POSSIBLE SIGNALS SUCH AS THE APPARENT CHINESE FAILURE TO PROCEED WITH THE PROMISED TRIAL OF THE SOVIET HELICOPTER CREW SEIZED ON CHINESE TERRITORY LAST MARCH AND ACCUSED OF ESPIONAGE AS WELL AS THE CLOSING DOWN OF DISPLAYS OF AIR-RAID SHELTERS.

INTER-PARTY RELATIONSHIPS IN ANY EVENT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE, AND WITH A EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTY CONFERENCE COMING UP AND THE SOVIET DESIRE TO ORGANIZE - AGAINST THE WISH OF OTHER COMMUNIST PARTIES - A WORLD CONFERENCE WHICH HAS CLEARLY ANTI-CHINESE AIMS, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT MUCH PROGRESS, IF ANY, IS POSSIBLE ON THIS FRONT.

7. THE IMPRESSION PREVAILS IN EACH CAPITAL THAT THE DISPUTE CANNOT BE TERMINATED SO LONG AS BREZHNEV AND HIS COLLEAGUES GOVERN RUSSIA AND MAO-TSE-TUNG AND CHOU EN LAI RULE CHINA. THE VENERABLE MAO IS FLAGGING AND CHOU HAS BEEN ILL FOR MONTHS. BREZHNEV HAS MAINTAINED HIS PROMINENT POSITION AND THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF ANY IMMEDIATE THREAT TO THE STABILITY OF THE LEADERSHIP; BUT AGE AND HEALTH FACTORS COULD LEAD TO A TAKEOVER BY A NEW SET OF LEADERS. AWARE OF THESE IMPENDING CHANGES, ARE THE TWO MAOIST POWERS

GETTING READY TO MAKE A DEAL WHEN FRESH LEADERSHIPS TAKE OVER
OR DOES EACH HOPE TO INFLUENCE THE POLITICAL SUCCESSION IN THE
OTHER?

THE REASONS FOR CHINA'S HOSTILITY TO THE USSR ARE
TERRITORIAL, DEFENSIVE AND IDEOLOGICAL. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE
THAT ANY MAJOR FACTOR IN PEKING WOULD BE INCLINED TO SUBORDINATE
THESE FACTORS TO THE IDEA THAT THE NON-COMMUNIST WORLD IS THE
PRIME OPPONENT. HOWEVER, SOME OF MAO'S POTENTIAL SUCCESSORS MAY
FEEL THAT, BY LESSENING TENSION ALONG THE BORDER, THEY CAN
INCREASE THEIR SCOPE TO INFLUENCE EVENTS ELSEWHERE.
END TEXT.MCAULIFFE

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